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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TOM UDALL, a Senator from the State of New Mexico.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal spirit, You are our strength and song. Who is like You, majestic in holiness and wondrous in mighty deeds? Give our Senators this day understanding minds to legislate responsibly. As they seek to govern in a way worthy of Your goodness, guide them by the light of Your truth. Infuse them with Your perfect peace as they keep their minds focused on You. May they overcome cynicism with civility in their relationships and work.

O Lord, we wait for You and acknowledge that You alone are sovereign. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable TOM UDALL led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. INOUE).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 8, 2012.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable TOM UDALL, a Senator from the State of New Mexico, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for an hour—The majority will control the first half, Republicans the final half. Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of the surface transportation bill.

As most know, late last night we reached an agreement to move forward on the highway bill. Under the order that has been issued, I can schedule those votes anytime after consultation with the Republican leader, so we have some 30 votes to complete today. We will see how this works. I think we will have the first vote about 2:15 today and start working through these amendments.

There is not going to be a lot of debate, so if anybody wants to speak on these amendments they better come over after the morning business hour and start telling people how they feel about some amendments, because there is not going to be a lot of time during the voting on the amendments.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2173

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I believe S. 2173 is at the desk and due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2173) to preserve and protect the free choice of individual employees to form, join, or assist labor organizations, or to refrain from such activities.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I object to any further proceedings with respect to this bill.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard. The bill will be placed on the calendar.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, last night the two parties reached an agreement on amendments to the highway bill. As the majority leader will indicate shortly, or may already have before I came to the floor, we will be able to move forward on that later today.

I am also happy to report there are a number of strong, very strong, job-creating measures in the mix. One that stands out is Senator HOEVEN's amendment on the Keystone XL Pipeline, that massive private sector project that will create 20,000 jobs almost immediately.

Most Americans strongly support building the pipeline and, of course, the significant number of construction jobs that would come along with it. It is incomprehensible to me that the President of the United States, as I read, is actually lobbying against the Keystone Pipeline amendment. There is a report this morning that the President is personally making phone calls to Democratic Senators he thinks might vote for the amendment, asking them not to. Frankly, it is hard to comprehend how completely out of touch he is on this issue.

Think about it. At a moment when millions are out of work, gas prices are

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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